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ABSTRACT

The lion's share of funding made available under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was directed to schools that served large numbers of children from low-income families. In an attempt to quickly upgrade the quality of reading instruction in these schools, specialist teachers were hired to supplement the reading instruction offered in the regular classroom program (or the "first system" of education). The ESEA institutionalized compensatory education and fostered the emergence of the second system of education which now includes remedial programs in reading, writing, mathematics, special education programs for the "mildly handicapped," as well other programs for at-risk students. The second system is now so pervasive that every public school incorporates one or more of its programs. But the second system has largely failed to improve education for children who find learning to read difficult. Unless the fundamentally flawed second system is replaced by an enhanced first system of regular education, the educational prospects for children who find learning to read difficult will not improve. The introduction of an integrated language arts effort may serve as a catalyst for rethinking the conventional wisdom that currently fragments curriculum, instruction, and professional responsibility for developing literacy in at-risk students. (A 31-item bibliography is attached.) (SAM)

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Reducing the Risk: Integrated Language Arts in Restructured Elementary Schools

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Reducing the Risk: Integrated Language Arts in Restructured Elementary Schools

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One by one, two by two, and in small groups, children leave Ms. Ford's second-grade classroom until only nine of the twenty-two children remain in the classroom. Some children left for their daily half-hour with the reading teacher, some for math or writing remediation, others who have been identified as mildly handicapped (e.g., learning disabled, language impaired, attention deficit disordered) left for the special education resource room for a daily hour-long instructional session, one has gone for physical therapy, another to an ESL session, and several are participating in the school's gifted and talented program in another classroom. Throughout the day children come and go from Ms. Ford's classroom but the coming and going is busiest right now, at 10:30 in the morning. Some children participate in two or three different special support programs. There are those who leave once each week to participate in the district's award-winning counseling program for children of divorced parents. Others leave to participate in an instrumental music program. A few leave early once a week to attend religion classes at a nearby parochial school.

The impact of all this coming and going is substantial. Ms. Ford has her intact class for less than one hour each day, and not that on some days. "I really think that the children would be better off if everyone of them stayed with me all day every day," she sighs. "It isn't that our special programs and special teachers aren't good, but that I know more about what these children need than anyone else but it is simply impossible for me to organize my day to actually give that to them. I am always at a loss as to who has gone where and for how long or who missed what while they were out. I just cannot plan any coherent instructional program because so many kids are gone so much. I just wish they would give my kids back to me and leave us alone so that I could teach them." (Classroom observation and teacher interview, 1990).

In the 1960s the War on Poverty was launched and with it came the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). In an attempt to provide more funds to schools that served large numbers of children from low-income families, the lion's share of the funding made available under Title 1 of ESEA was directed to these schools. In an attempt to quickly upgrade the quality of reading instruction in these schools specialist teachers were hired to supplement the reading instruction offered in the regular classroom program (or the "first system" of education).

These special reading teachers were to provide additional high-quality reading lessons to educationally disadvantaged children. It was these extra-instructional sessions that were to compensate for the economic and educational disadvantage some children had experienced (Allington, 1986). The ESEA institutionalized compensatory education and fostered the emergence of the second system of education (Wang, Reynolds & Walberg, 1988). This "second system" expanded quite rapidly and now includes compensatory and remedial education programs in reading, writing, and mathematics, special education programs for the "mildly handicapped" (e.g., learning disabled, language impaired, educable mentally handicapped, attention deficit disordered, etc.) which emerged largely after the passage of PL 94-142, the Education of Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975, bilingual education, migrant education, and other smaller, less-well-targeted programs (e.g., dropout prevention, gifted and talented programs, self-esteem programs, parent training, etc.). The second system is now so pervasive that every public school incorporates one or more of the programs. Schools which serve large numbers of poor children rely extensively on second system programs and funding in the attempt to meet the instructional needs of the children they serve.

In this paper I will argue that the rise of the second system has largely failed to improve education for children who find learning to read difficult. Further, I suggest that until we replace the fundamentally flawed second system with an enhanced first system of regular education, the educational prospects for children who find learning to read difficult will not improve. The introduction of an integrated language arts effort may serve as a catalyst for rethinking the conventional wisdom that currently fragments curriculum, instruction, and professional responsibility for developing literacy of children who find learning to read difficult.

Diversity, Poverty, and Learning to Read

Racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity are at the center of much of the discussion about improving schooling for children deemed at-risk of school failure generally, and for those experiencing difficulty in literacy learning specifically. Poverty is less often the focus of such discussions. This is unfortunate because familial poverty is more directly related to school failure than racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. We generally fail to note that two of three children who live in poverty are not members of minority groups (Smith-Burke, 1989), nor are most dropouts, most LD children, or most remedial program participants. We rarely discuss the achievements of minority middle class children. For instance, little note is made of the fact that roughly 40% of all African-American families are members of the middle class and that, academically, their children outperform poor children regardless of ethnicity. We rarely discuss the fact that nearly three times as many minority middle-class children achieve advanced level performance on mathematics assessments compared to poor White children (Hodgkinson, 1991).

None of this is meant to downplay the dismal performance of many schools that serve large numbers of minority children. None of this is meant to suggest that minority status is an unimportant aspect of educational status. Rather, the point to be made is that familial wealth and parental educational attainment levels are simply the most important influence on children's school performance. Too often it is only the poverty that forces itself upon us, the poverty of

urban America, that we worry about and discuss (Dunbar, 1988). It is the children of the poor and poorly educated that our schools are most likely to fail to nurture and more of these children live outside our central cities than within them. Too often the schools that serve these children, regardless of the community or geographic region, make the children's family status their educational destiny.

Ironically, in this era of rising academic expectations we also see rising levels of poverty, especially among families with school-aged children. Currently, about one-quarter of all children live in poverty. No other industrialized nation allows so many children such a fate. Most of these children are the children of the working poor, adults with low levels of education who will be unlikely to find one of the unionized manufacturing jobs that provided the economic opportunity and stability for previous generations of workers. Eleven million workers earn the minimum wage or close to it; the majority of these workers are single mothers over age 25. Such full-time work for a single parent still results in family income below the poverty level. Fifteen million children are being raised in single-parent households where the average annual income is within a thousand dollars of the official poverty level ($11,400 for single-parent households, $34,000 for two-parent households). Approximately half of all children will live in a single parent home before their eighteenth birthday (Hodgkinson, 1991).

This increasing incidence of childhood poverty is a result of a steady erosion of the benefits and wages of the working class throughout the 1980s. This was not a problem that schools created nor was it created by the working poor or their children. However, no one seems to want to admit that childhood poverty is a direct result of policy changes that produced the current economy. Instead, it is more common to blame the victims, the poor children and their parents (Dunbar, 1988). It is also popular to blame the schools.

The U.S. ranks number fourteen out of sixteen industrialized nations in terms of K-12 educational expenditures. Our funding of education exhibits far greater variability from community to community than any other nation (Hodgkinson, 1991). We currently concentrate our educational resources on those children most likely to be successful in school. The level of funding for schools in suburban, middle-class communities substantially outstrips the funding provided schools that serve large numbers of poor children in our cities, towns, and rural areas (Kozol, 1991). No one can rationally explain why we should be concentrating expenditures of funds in educating the children of the suburbs. It was this differential access to funding that largely initiated the second system of federal and state supported categorical programs.

The Emergence and Impact of the Second System

Prior to the ESEA of 1965 there was little federal involvement in or funding for educational programs (Spring, 1989). Title 1 (now Chapter 1) of the ESEA initiated federal funding for compensatory education programs. The funds have always been linked to poverty levels in the communities served by participating schools. Schools which serve large numbers of poor children are eligible for larger amounts of federal support than schools with few poor children. Some states, recognizing the inequity in educational funding levels in wealthy and poor

districts, have created parallel funding efforts. The net result, however, is that schools with many poor children do qualify for additional fiscal support but these additional monies rarely bring funding levels to comparability with schools in wealthier communities and the funds come with strings attached.

In an attempt to ensure that the federal funds allocated under ESEA were spent on programs which served poor children an audit procedure was established and regulations developed governing expenditures. A fundamental principle was that these funds should be used to supplement local expenditures, rather than supplant them. Basically, the rules required schools to use the funds to purchase something above and beyond the educational services that all children normally received. The simplest method of demonstrating compliance was to hire extra personnel, purchase different curriculum materials for those persons to use, and locate them in a setting away from the regular classroom (Allington, 1986). This was how the second system entered our schools. No theory of instruction suggested that using a separate teacher with a different curriculum in another location was the preferred program design. The separate teacher, second curriculum, and pull-out instruction that came to dominate the activity of the second system grew from regulatory compliance, not learning theory.

In 1975 the Education of Handicapped Children Act was passed, ensuring education of handicapped children in the "least restrictive environment." At the same time, the concept of "learning disabilities (LD)" was codified and the category became a legally recognized handicapping condition. Prior to 1975 there were virtually no children identified as LD. By 1990, however, this group accounted for half of all children identified as handicapped. Between 1975 and 1985 about 1 million children were added to the roles of LD programs and there was a decrease of roughly the same number of children participating in compensatory education (McGill-Franzen, 1987). In other words, the shifting patterns of participation suggest that many children who had been receiving remedial assistance under programs funded through ESEA were now being served through the expanded special education programs. The most commonly used special education program design was similar to pullout design that dominated remedial and compensatory education programs. During this same era there was an expansion of bilingual education efforts which also typically employed the pullout design.

By the 1980s the second system of compensatory, remedial, special, and bilingual education was in full bloom. School systems with large numbers of poor children now had a variety of categorical funds to tap in order to design educational support programs for children. A child experiencing difficulty learning to read and write was now categorized as disadvantaged, handicapped, or a second-language learner. Based on the categorical identification, the child was then slotted for service in one, or more, of the categorical programs. The vast majority of these children remained as participants in the first system, the regular education classroom, but they were pulled out of that classroom for instruction in a second system program as well. In too many classrooms, children could be seen coming and going all day long. A virtual parade from the classroom, down the hall or out to the modular, and then back to the classroom a half hour or an hour later.

The most common situation for participating children, typically children who had found

learning to read and write difficult, was to leave the classroom and miss some or all of the classroom reading and language arts instruction. Once down the hall, the second system offered instruction on a different reading/language arts curriculum, often a curriculum philosophically incompatible with that of the classroom program. The children who participated in the second system typically received neither more nor better reading/language arts instruction than the children who did not participate. In too many cases, the second system actually reduced both the quantity and quality of instruction so that children who participated received less and worse instruction than children who remained in the regular classroom (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Hyde & Moore, 1988; McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991). None of this was intended, of course, but the impact of the second system has been substantial and not wholly positive.

The second system rarely expands the quantity of instruction that children receive. By operating during the school day these programs can add no instructional time. The second system rarely intensifies instruction. The size of the groups of children in the second system is typically not very different from the size of classroom instructional groups. The lowest achievers in classrooms often work with their teacher in groups of 5-7 children while the "second system" groups are typically of similar size. In addition, "second system" teachers typically see a larger number of students for shorter periods of time than classroom teachers. Reading teachers, for instance, often carry caseloads of fifty children, each child participating in half-hour small group lessons three times each week. The number of children, the size of the groups, and the duration of the lessons all work against the specialist teacher developing more intensive and personalized instruction than the classroom teacher. The second system fragments the curriculum and the instructional experiences for children. Even with the recent shift in emphasis on collaboration between the regular and second system (LeTendre, 1991), primary grade children who participate in the second system must adapt to the routines of two or more teachers while their achieving peers must master only one (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1990).

Perhaps even more problematic than the fragmentation of the instructional experience is the fragmentation of professional responsibility brought on by the rise of the second system. As we have added categorical programs and specialist teachers we have fostered a reduced commitment to educating all children in the first system of the regular classroom. In some schools we have studied upwards of 90% of the classroom teachers report that teaching mainstreamed LD students is not their responsibility. In these same schools 75% of the classroom teachers report that children who participate in remedial programs are not their responsibility! When children who find learning to read difficult spend as much as 95% of their schooling with classroom teachers who report that teaching these children is not their job, we cannot expect to find the rich, supportive, and comprehensive instructional effort that is needed to ensure that all children will learn (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991).

The "Cult of the Normal Curve"

Undergirding the second system is the "cult of the normal curve". This view of learners presumes that the normal curve distribution of standardized test scores (both achievement tests

and aptitude tests) is the only possible outcome of educational programs. Thus, it indicates the inevitability of a group of low achievers--children who cannot be expected to attain reading proficiency comparable to their peers. The belief in the validity of the normal curve distribution is so strong that many educators cannot imagine schools without children who fail to acquire literacy along with their peers (Winfield, 1986). Unfortunately, as long as this view is accepted as conventional wisdom there will be little impetus to design schools where all children learn to read and write along with their classmates. We have good evidence that virtually all children who enter our schools in kindergarten can acquire literacy with their peers but we fail, typically, to organize our schools and distribute our resources in ways that will facilitate this outcome (Clay, 1991; McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991).

The adherence to the belief in the inevitability of the normal curve distribution of achievement literally bars us from even thinking about designing schools where all children succeed. A "slow it down and make it more concrete" philosophy dominates our thinking, our planning, and our programs for children who find learning to read difficult (Allington, 1991). Within this pedagogy we slow the pace of instruction, lower our curricular expectations, and focus on the development of isolated skills with children who find learning to read difficult. The slower pace, lower expectations, and skill emphasis all conspire to ensure that children who begin school with few experiences with books and print will always remain behind their more advantaged peers in literacy acquisition. It is poor children who come to school inexperienced with print who find learning to read difficult. These are the children routinely denied access to the rich, literary experiences that foster in other children the enthusiasm for learning and for developing their own literacy.

The Conventional Scenario

For a quarter of a century we have been evolving the second system of remedial, compensatory, special, and bilingual education. The conventional scenario in each of these different programs has been for children to leave their first system regular classroom and travel to another room or relocatable for a 30-60 minute small group session with other children similarly categorized. The curriculum and instruction offered typically were not linked to the classroom curriculum or instruction (though under the new Chapter 1 regulations such links are now mandated) and involved more worksheet and drill activity than actual reading and writing (Allington, 1991).

We have garnered a quarter-century of research and evaluation on the effects of such conventional scenarios on student achievement (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991; LeTendre, 1991) and the failure of the conventional second system scenario to accelerate the achievement of most participating students is well documented. We have developed far better understandings of how children acquire literacy and the role that classrooms and classroom teachers play in this. Much of what we have learned sits in direct opposition to both conventional wisdom and the conventional scenario.

Rethinking How We Might Support Children Who Find Learning To Read Difficult

The conventional wisdom that dominates our thinking and our programs considers the difficulties that some children encounter in school as located in deficiencies and differences in those children. Classrooms, curriculum, and instruction have been largely omitted from our conventional explanations of literacy learning difficulties. It has become clear that the nature of classrooms and the instruction offered in them are most important elements in developing literacy in children, especially poor children. We have ignored classrooms and classroom teachers (the "first system") for too long. If we are to create schools where all children are successful, we must refocus our attention on the regular education classroom (Cunningham & Allington, 1993). We need to focus on the few issues that are truly central to the education of poor children.

Providing All Students Access To A Single Rich Literacy Curriculum

Providing all childrer access to a single, rich literacy curriculum should be the base for rethinking schooling for the children of poverty, the children who most often find learning to read difficult. There is sufficient evidence that we ensure continued low-achievement when we adopt "slow it down- water it down" instructional approaches with these children. There is sufficient evidence that creating achievement groups and selecting different curricula for different groups perpetuates and expands differences in children. It is only after we make the commitment to a single curriculum for all children and a commitment to provide access to sufficient instruction to ensure all children are successful that we can begin to rethink how we might reorganize the resources of the first and second systems of education to respond to the differences that are inherent in any group of children (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991).

An integrated approach to the language arts would be an appropriate base for beginning to think about the design of a single literacy curriculum for all students. The most common approaches to literacy curriculum development over the past 20 years have been quite different, with separate and largely independent curricula for reading, spelling, language arts, and writing with listening, speaking, and performing typically neglected. The result has been instructional programs that obscure the natural relationships among the literacy areas. Commonly, reading content, genre, and strategy focus have had no obvious relationship to writing instruction or activities. Writing activity, even writing process activity, has been unrelated to spelling. Spelling has been unrelated to word study components of the reading curriculum.

All in all, the most common elementary school experience for all children over the past few years has been literacy instruction that was fragmented and incoherent. Such an approach makes literacy learning far more difficult than it has to be. In addition, children who found learning to read difficult often experienced even greater fragmentation and incoherence as they worked in two or more different reading curricula; one in the regular classroom program and another while participating in instruction in the second system. It was these children, those who were experiencing the most difficulty making sense of the instruction they received, that were asked to exhibit the greatest flexibility and integrate the largest amount of diverse instruction

into some coherent whole (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991).

Basals and Books as Curriculum

How to define the single, rich literacy curriculum that all children would have access to is at the center of much recent controversy. The conventional scenario has placed basal reading and language arts textbooks at the core of the regular classroom literacy curriculum (the second system programs used these materials less often, opting instead to use commercial curriculum materials marketed for special programs). The companies that produce the children's literature anthologies, the ancillaries, and the teacher's editions of basal series are market sensitive and attempt to deliver to the marketplace products the educators will purchase. These series are modified as the market shifts and recent trends include expanding the use of children's literature, the virtual elimination of the traditional practice of editing original stories to meet readability guidelines impose by state education agencies, a reduction in the number and a shift in the nature of workbook materials, and an increase in the integration of reading, writing, spelling, and dramatics.

Nonetheless, basal series have been wholly eliminated in some districts and their role deemphasized in others. Most often children's literature has been selected to replace the basal anthologies for reading lessons and process writing replaced the language arts basals. In our recent work, we have been studying schools which are integrating the use of children's literature into the reading and language arts curriculum. Each of the participating schools serve substantial numbers of poor children (from 25 to 90% of the student population). In these schools, we have found four types of curricular organization as teachers attempt to implement a literature-based integrated language arts curriculum.

The first curricular pattern is the basal curriculum. In these classrooms the teachers implement a literature-based basal reading curriculum and most lessons are drawn from the commercial materials. The newer basals used in the schools we studied offered a broader language arts curriculum than has traditionally been the case. In addition to emphasizing anthologies of children's literature, the lessons offered composition activities linked to the stories read, spelling and editing lessons, and dramatic enactments. Some of these classrooms have classroom libraries and literature kits but tradebooks are used almost exclusively for personal independent reading. Many of these classrooms set aside daily blocks of time for DEAR or USSR independent reading and some teachers regularly read aloud to children from tradebooks.

A second curricular pattern we call the basal plus books organization. Again, a literature-emphasis basal reader series is the base for the instructional program. However, children's tradebooks are used instructionally and linked to the basal reading or the composing that the children do. In some of these classrooms the basal is used only a few days each week and tradebooks, composing, art, music, and dramatic enactment activities occupy the remaining days. While these classrooms regularly use a basal series, the teachers select lesson elements they feel are most appropriate and eliminate much of the suggested activity.

A third pattern we call the books plus basal organizational plan. In these classrooms tradebooks drive the instruction, usually through a thematic organizational plan. Children read literature and their primary reading strategy lessons are developed from those books. Composing, art, and dramatic enactment are linked to the literature themes. In these classrooms teachers do "dip into" the basal reader series on a fairly regular basis but do not have children read all the stories or complete all the lessons. The teachers do not necessarily work from the front of the basal to the back. The basal is used as an anthology offering a variety of genre and a source for focused skill and strategy lessons.

In the fourth and final organizational scheme, which we have called the books classroom, tradebooks are the core and commercial curriculum materials are seldom used. Children read literature and it is from that literature that their primary reading strategy lessons are developed. Thematic curriculum organization and special attention to genre are often hallmarks of this approach. Composing, art, and dramatic enactment are linked to the literature (c.f. Walmsley & Walp, 1990).

In the various schools we have studied we typically find teachers whose classrooms represent all of these organizational patterns. We have also found variation between the four classroom organizational schemes. For instance, we have found some basal classrooms where children have greater opportunity to personally select some of the material they read than the opportunity afforded children in some books classrooms. We have found books classrooms where the reading and language arts activities are far better linked than in some basal classrooms. In some basal plus books classroom teachers allocated far more time to reading and language arts each day than was allocated in some books plus basal classrooms. There existed wide variation across all types of classrooms on the use of standard seatwork assignments, but students in basal classrooms spent more time on seatwork than others. We found that some children struggled with the literacy tasks assigned them in all four categories of classrooms.

Most of the teachers we observed fell into either the basal plus book or the books plus basal organizational schemes. Rather few teachers fit our exclusively basal and most who did worked in schools where use of the basal was the expectation. Few fit the exclusively books scheme, and again we were more likely to find these teachers in those schools where that was the endorsed scheme. These results mirror those reported by Canney and Neuenfeldt (1992) from their survey of several hundred teachers in five states. Only 2.5% of their respondents reported "following the basal closely," another 15% said they used the basal "as a general guide," 63% reported using both basals and tradebooks, and 10% reported using tradebooks only. Perhaps more importantly, over half of the respondents reported that they "were exploring new ideas" in their reading and language arts instruction.

If we are ever to rid ourselves of the conventional wisdom that has dominated literacy instruction for the past quarter-century, teachers will have to explore new ideas. Unraveling the conventional wisdom that led us to create bottom reading groups, a slow-it-down pedagogy, fragmented curricular approaches, and the second system of education will require teachers to explore new organizational schemes for classrooms and curricula. Accepting a single integrated language arts curriculum as the curriculum for all students will require exploring new ideas and

the development of a new "conventional wisdom." Creating schools with educational programs that provide students access to sufficient appropriate instruction to allow them to work successfully in that curriculum will require substantially reorganizing our current instructional programs, especially those programs that are now part of the second system (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991). We will have to focus our attention on the primary grades and develop instructional programs that accelerate the literacy learning of the lowest-achieving children. We need to develop instructional programs that prevent early learning difficulties from becoming long-term learning problems. Altering the conventional wisdom requires that we begin somewhere. We can begin by turning our attention to essential aspects--those that really do matter.

What Really Matters

Too often we get caught up in rather useless dichotomous debates about which curriculum to select (e.g., basals vs. books), which aspect of literacy learning should be emphasized in our instruction (e.g., decoding vs. comprehension), whether our program should be teacher-directed or child- centered, whether we group by achievement or offer whole class instruction, and so on. The popularity and resilience of these false dichotomies is actually quite amazing since there can be no correct answer in these either/or debates. Different teachers in different communities working with different children would obviously not all opt to teach the same things in the same way to all children. Such false dichotomies deny everything we know about good teachers and good teaching. It is not just children who differ but so do their teachers, their parents, and their communities.

What really matters in learning to be literate, especially if a child comes to school from a home where literacy events take a back seat to television events, is that the adults in the school organize the day in ways that allow the child to engage in a variety of meaningful and appropriate tasks, while teaching important literacy knowledges, skills, and strategies and with substantial time set aside to engage in reading, writing, talking, and thinking activities. These elements that really matter can be achieved with a wide range of curricular options and organizational arrangements. More simply, there is not and cannot be a "one best way" that will prove superior to all others regardless of the children, the teacher, and the community they live and work in. It is time we gave up the quest for this mythical "one best way" and, instead, concentrated our efforts on the things that really matter.

Activities. The work that children do in school does matter. There is probably no better measure of what children learn than an analysis of the kinds of tasks they are given. If we fill their days with an array of assignments that require them primarily to locate and remember discrete bits of information, abstract rules, and isolated skills, we should not be surprised to find they experience difficulty when asked to complete work that would require evaluating, summarizing, contrasting, discussing, composing, enacting, or responding. We have argued that children are more likely to learn what they are taught than that which they are not. Simple enough. It would seem that the most recent reports of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) bear this axiom out.

The NAEP reports suggest that most children can read single paragraphs or very short selections and correctly answer multiple-choice questions about facts in those passages. Rather few students had much difficulty achieving the basic literacy levels on the assessment. However, when asked to read, write, and think simultaneously, hardly any students demonstrated the ability. Their performance on advanced literacy items, those items that required the reading of articles, essays, or short stories followed by tasks that required students to summarize, evaluate, synthesize, contrast, or interpret was truly dismal. Few students were able to demonstrate these abilities. At the same time, report after report on the nature of classroom instruction (and even more so in the case of second system instruction) depicted schooling as a series of unhinged encounters with brief bits of texts followed by some locate and remember activity (Goodlad, 1983).

The work that children do in school, the tasks they complete, is simply the "experienced curriculum." A focus on the literacy activities children engage in is simply another way of examining curriculum. A key point in any restructuring of the elementary school is to ask what kinds of work do we want children to do across their five to seven year stay with us? Series of activities that are hinged, that are linked together in meaningful ways, offer the best opportunity for fostering real learning. It is the integration of the work activity we give children that creates the integrated curriculum that has been so long ignored. It would seem to matter less, for instance, precisely which books children read, which mammals they studied, which biography they examined, than what kinds of work they did while reading, studying, or examining.

In the conventional scenario, children who found learning to read difficult experienced the least well integrated curriculum and the fewest opportunities to read and write. If we are to foster literacy among all children, then creating integrated language arts activities is essential. All children, but especially those having difficulty, benefit from activities that highlight the interrelationships among the language arts. It is through integrative activities that children see the links between comprehending and composing, between decoding and spelling, between reading and vocabulary, and so on. The integrated language arts hold enormous promise for fostering thoughtful literacy in teachers and children.

Teaching. While the work we give children to do is critical, how we give it and how we support them while working really matters also. We have never been very clear about what we mean by teaching. Is it what teachers do all day, including attendance, lining up, snack, and all those events from which school days are constructed? Or, is it those few moments alongside a child when we explain, model, discuss, praise, and so on? Is it all this and more? This lack of focus makes it more difficult to talk about good teaching, at least in the sense of the specific instructional dialogues that a teacher will have with a student or a group of students.

It seems that the explicit teacher talk that models strategies, supports attempts to apply these strategies, encourages risk-taking, fosters thinking and praises good effort is absolutely essential, especially for children experiencing difficulty, and yet it is often in short supply (Duffy, Roehler & Rackliffe, 1986). A most common work activity for students has been reading a story, an excerpt, or a chapter and then selecting or transcribing answers to questions about the content of material read. This most common activity has been found in basal classrooms as

teachers use the teacher's guide questions and in books classrooms as teachers used novel guides or teacher-made worksheets. What has been rarely evident is any explicit teaching. Too often no strategy was modelled that students were to use. No think-aloud activities were offered by the teacher to demonstrate one way of puzzling through a story. The most common classroom scenario more often consisted of a simple assessment of student remembering of selected story events with no instructional component. Children who knew how to employ appropriate strategies did just that and responded correctly. Children who did not know how to use the strategy, of course, did not and responded incorrectly. They often left the lesson knowing their response was wrong and knowing the correct response, but still not knowing how to use the appropriate strategy to respond correctly.

Based on such performances some children are judged "good" comprehenders and some judged to have "weak" comprehension. Unfortunately, teaching of the effective strategy rarely follows these activities. Instead, day after day good comprehenders continue to perform well and weak comprehenders continue to perform less well and remain puzzled about how the good comprehenders do whatever it is that they do. But much of this "comprehending" is no more than locating or remembering names, places, incidences. We have too often confused question-answering with comprehension (Allington & Weber, 1992). Only infrequently do we see "thoughtful" classrooms where students puzzle through their understanding of a story together--where the teacher engages them in discussion instead of interrogation. Unfortunately, American schools seem to have but few thoughtful classrooms (Brown, 1991).

Teaching is one of those few things that really matter. Providing children with a wonderfully rich and integrated set of activities is a good beginning but without frequent, explicit, personalized teaching some children will simply never "discover" the skills and strategies they need to successfully complete the work they are given. The best person to offer this consistent, high-quality instructional talk is the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers should know the children in their classrooms better than anyone else in the school. They should know the work that children are given to do better than anyone else in the school. They should know better than anyone else the difficulties that some children are having with the work they are trying to do in that curriculum. Teaching really matters and classroom teachers do most of the teaching in our schools. While we have largely ignored classroom teachers for twenty-five years in our development of the second system programs, it is time to acknowledge the centrality of the classroom in determining children's literacy learning.

Time. Time is another one of those things that really matters. It takes time to teach and time to learn. As we begin to reorganize our efforts, we must rethink the traditions around school time. Currently, all children attend school for about the same amount of time. All children arrive and depart school at about the same time. All schools begin and end the school year at about the same time. While we willingly admit that some children need more time, we have not typically organized our schools around this knowledge. We have created a second system that operates within the normal school day and, as such cannot expand instructional time. In fact, we have organized schools so that often those children who we admit need more instructional time actually receive less (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Birman, 1988). In schools with large numbers of poor children and substantial participation in second system programs, we often find

classroom teachers who, like Ms. Ford, have no single hour long block in which all children are present. Instead, children come and go all day long from one special program to another, and then to another. In too many schools, children simply do not have large uninterrupted blocks of time to learn and to engage in reading, writing, and discussion. In these same schools, teachers do not have the time to teach, to organize blocks of uninterrupted time to guide and monitor reading and writing development. As we have expanded our second system programs we have often eliminated the possibility of integrated, coherent, and uninterrupted work periods in the classroom.

When we think about time, we need to think about providing teachers and children with large blocks of uninterrupted time for learning. Small blocks of time foster small tasks, larger blocks foster larger tasks. If we are ever to get away from our current reliance upon multiple sets of unrelated small tasks as the experienced curriculum, we must restructure the school day and week. It seems that the most effective classrooms in elementary school offer about two to two and one-half hours of reading/language arts instruction each day (though many offer more, especially in the primary grades). Creating an uninterrupted block of time from 9:00am to 11:30am each day (or from 12:30am to 3:00am) would seem a good start towards establishing a restructured school day. Uninterrupted blocks of time are really not very difficult to achieve when our minds are set on it. Uninterrupted means that no children leave the room, no specialist enters the room (except perhaps to team-teach the core curriculum), and no messages are delivered to the door or come blasting over the intercom (except in true emergencies).

With such uninterrupted time blocks in place, teachers can invent a significantly different curriculum and create significantly different types of work to engage children. The point is that the best way to read a book is not at the rate of 10-15 minute blocks per day. The best way to write an essay, a biography, a review, or a summary, is not in 10-15 minute blocks of time. Yet, we continue to structure our schools so that 10-20 minute blocks of time dominate our thinking, our planning, and our lessons. Time is one of those things that really does matter and when it is ignored, there is a decided lack of available time to teach and learn uninterrupted by the comings and goings to "specials."

Some children need extra instructional time in order to learn to read. We have organized our school days in ways that deny the existence of differences in learners when we schedule all children for the same amount of time. Some children might well benefit from participating in one of the current second system programs were it offered outside the regular school day. For instance, some children who are now pulled our of the classroom for remedial reading instruction might be well served in an extended-day program instead. In such a case, these children would arrive an hour before school or stay an hour after school (or come for Saturday school). So too might some children who participate in resource room programs for the mildly handicapped or children who participate in bilingual education programs. We might extend the school year for some children so that not everyone routinely ended school on the same day.

If we could think about time more flexibly and reject the tradition that everyone goes to school for the same number of hours and days each year, we could begin to create programs that would ensure that all children were successful. If we thought about how homes have changed,

we would notice that in most families, no adult is there when children arrive home from school at 2:30 p.m. or 3:00 p.m. (Martin, 1992). If we organized school in accordance with the real world of children we would have schools that were open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. and offered a variety of programs during that time period. We would have teachers who had flextime opportunities that allowed them to arrange their schedules to best meet the instructional needs presented by the children they teach. We could move art, music, and physical education into extended day programs rather than perpetuating the current original pattern of a weekly 45 minute class which is largely unhinged from core curriculum lessons. The arts curriculum, especially, might be substantially strengthened and better linked to core curriculum lessons by moving it into the extended day program where larger blocks of time could be devoted to it. We would move most of the second system out of the core instructional day and have reading specialists, math specialists, writing specialists, school psychologists, social workers, and so on available from noon until 7:00 p.m. to work with children and their parents in the extended day programs.

In short, time is one of the things that really matters but we seem trapped in the 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. workday and try to squeeze everything into that time period. As we added special programs less time was then left available for teachers to actually teach and for children to actually learn. Until we undo much of what we have done over the past twenty-five years and until we begin to rethink our use of time, many teachers will not have the time to teach a rich, wonderful, integrated curriculum. The children harmed most by our current schemes are those children who need extra attention, extra instruction, extra opportunity to read and write, and extra time it takes for all of this. We simply can no longer just penalize those children who need more time. We must begin to build school programs that expand their opportunity to learn.

What Might We Do Differently with Second System Resources?

The second system has become so firmly entrenched in our schools that too often we forget that the state and federal funds that support these programs were intended to strengthen the capacity of the regular education system to meet the instructional needs of all children. In other words, we typically elect to spend those state and federal funds to hire paraprofessionals or specialist teachers and ignore other options. Even when we work to imagine "new" schools to meet today's challenges, we ignore other potential uses for the funds that currently support the second system. As we go about rethinking conventional wisdom in our attempt to create schools where all children become literate alongside their peers, we need to address potential roles for the funds that support the second system.

We could use the funds that currently support the second system to extend the day, the week, or the school year for children who find learning to read difficult. We could use the funds to pay teachers to teach in Saturday school sessions--usually offering small group and tutorial assistance to readers in trouble. We could decide to keep class sizes unchanged and, instead, schedule the specialist teachers for the 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. shift in our revised school day. We could use the funds to pay teachers for working year round, for teaching in what used to be called "summer school." Since it seems widely accepted that many children would benefit from larger

quantities of instruction, shifting funds to extended time models and away from expanding the second system might gather support.

Earlier we proposed the "accountability" model (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989) wherein the second system programs would be eliminated and the funds used to reemploy the second system personnel as classroom teachers. We called this the "accountability" model because it returned responsibility for educating all children to the regular education system. In this scenario there would be no special education teachers, reading teachers, school psychologists, federal programs administrators, school social workers, speech teachers, art or music teachers, gifted and talented teachers, or special program coordinators. All second system personnel, including the art, music, and physical education teachers, would move back into the regular education system as classroom teachers. This would enable us to lower class size to about 15 students, though in schools with many poor children the number might be reduced to 10 or so. This would be accomplished without hiring any new personnel. In addition, by redeploying second system personnel as classroom teachers their expertise would be retained in the schools.

While elimination of the second system seems unlikely, if only because of the inertia of educational bureaucracies, it is time we closely examined the continued funding of the second system. We might look at emphasizing more collaborative efforts between the regular education system and the second system. The shifts in some schools to in-class remedial and special education services reflect this reemphasis on supporting children's core curriculum learning in the regular classroom (Gelzheiser, Meyers, & Pruzek, 1992). However, collaborative efforts have been resisted in many quarters, perhaps because the second system relieves regular education of the responsibility of educating all children.

Conclusion

Children of poverty are the children most at-risk in our schools. These are the children our schools will most likely fail to serve well. For nearly a century we have been refining the school sorting machinery and for a quarter-century we have been developing and expanding a "second system" of remedial, compensatory, special, and bilingual education to organize the instruction for those children sorted to the bottom of the pile, primarily, poor children with literacy learning difficulties. We have supported this madness with appeals to the potency of the normal curve as a predictor of academic destiny. This approach has dispersed professional responsibility, segregated some children from their peers, and fragmented both the curriculum and the instruction of those children most at-risk. It is time to unravel the current conventional wisdom and move towards creating schools where all children are successful. It is time to direct our energies toward things that really matter and end the noxious and endless dichotomous debates that so pervade our professional dialogue.

We need to create curriculum by asking: What kinds of work do we want children to do in our schools? We need to create curriculum that integrates the language arts and fosters thoughtful teaching and learning. Children's literature provides a substantial base for such a curriculum. However, we need to restructure our days so that large blocks of uninterrupted time

are available for teachers to teach and children to read, write, talk, and learn. We need to expand our view of the school day and reorganize in ways that allow us to provide some children with larger amounts of better instruction. We need to create curriculum that integrates the language arts and eliminates the planned curricular fragmentation that dominates in our schools. Finally, we need to refocus our attention on classrooms and classroom teachers, both have been largely ignored as we developed and expanded the second system. We can use the resources of that system to create more responsive schools and classrooms, but we must begin with the classroom and with the creation of a regular education system that accepts the responsibility for educating all children.

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